

The Biblical Unitarian Podcast - by Dustin Smith, PhD

Episode 378—"The Holy Spirit is God's Presence"

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Introduction

Last week, we began exploring the purposes and functions of the Spirit of Yahweh, also known as the Holy Spirit. We observed several texts that outright illustrated the Spirit as God's power, active in creation, redemption, and in equipping God's people to carry out their God-given roles.

Inevitably, the comments section started to fill with accusations that I was reducing the Holy Spirit down to an impersonal force. Let me just say one thing: I never once said that the Holy Spirit was impersonal. Not once, neither in my academic writings nor on my podcast. This week, we will continue exploring the Holy Spirit to show how it functions as the very presence of God himself.

Let me make myself clear. I think the biblical authors portray the Holy Spirit as the presence of a personal God. God extends himself with his Spirit. So, the Spirit is very personal, it is the presence of Yahweh himself. But a personal and powerful Holy Spirit is not the same as a conscious person called God the Holy Spirit, sitting alongside the Father. The Spirit is personal,

but it is not a third person. You are free to argue with my position all you want, but at least get my position correct.

What evidence is there for the Spirit of God's depiction as God's own presence?

1. The Holy Spirit as the Extended Presence of God Himself

- a. Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. (Ps 51:11)

מִלְּפָנֶיךָ וְרוּחַ קִדְשְׁךָ

2.

- a. Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? (Ps 139:7)

מֵרִוְחֶךָ

i.

מִפְּנֶיךָ

ii.

- b. "And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel" (Ezek 39:29).

רוּחִי

i.

- c. "It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions. Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. (Joel 2:28-29)
 - i. Acts 2, cf Acts 7 and the temple
- d. "I am with you" (Hag 2:4). In the following verse, Haggai clarifies how it is that God is with his people: "My Spirit is abiding in your midst" (Hag 2:5).
- e. "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor 3:17).

- f. “And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us” (1 John 3:24).
- g. No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. (1 John 4:12–13)

2. The Spirit in the New Temple of God

- h. What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a Father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor 6:16-18)
- i. “Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?” 1 Cor 3:16
- j. “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you” (1 Cor 6:19)
- k. “you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit” (Eph 2:22)

Thanks for listening to this week’s episode!

Join us next week as we continue our exploration of the Holy Spirit, examining how the Spirit is often personified as an agent of God, but not as a distinct person alongside God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Please look forward to our next episode.

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